

<1>Dialogue I: subaltern counter-publics

Eurig Scandrett and Paul Gilfillan

The Dialogue around Publics took the form of an invitation to the contributors to respond to a narrative around generative themes emerging from the cases in this section, and the extent to which the problematics posed in the Provocation were responded to. Whilst all contributors were invited to participate, this dialogue took the form of an extended email correspondence between Paul Gilfillan, author of Case I.4, and Eurig Scandrett, editor and author of Case 1.5 which is itself a response to an earlier version of Paul's case study. Whilst this inevitably puts a restriction on the diversity of voices in the section (not least because the only voices are those of the two male contributors), the correspondence between Paul and Eurig has provided the opportunity to examine, test and interrogate in some depth, the proposition of public sociology engagement with subaltern counter-publics.

In the provocation for this section, it is proposed that the publics with whom public sociologists should be engaging are best understood through Nancy Fraser's (1990) formulation of the subaltern counter-public. The public sociologist therefore has a role in contributing to the analysis of subalternity in terms of understanding social axes of oppression, exploitation and injustice, and contributing to the strategies of countering these. The means of analysis and strategy development is through dialogue between the resources of sociology (and other academic disciplines) and the praxis of publics engaged in struggle, and this dialogue is a pedagogical task. This argument builds on Burawoy's 'Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education' (Burawoy 2005 p. 7) and, more politically, Gramsci's 'every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship' (Hoare and Smith 1971 p.350).

How useful is this proposition?

The choice of cases from which to develop our dialogue have been drawn from selected forms of public sociology practice. In the newly emergent field of mad studies, the knowledge of mad-identifying people who have experience of psychiatric diagnosis or mental distress is validated and valued through a dialogical education programme *Mad People's History and Identity*. The feminist movement has constructed an analysis of violence from the collective experience of women, and demonstrates the ongoing engagement with this analysis through dialogue between practice and theory in pedagogy and in participatory research. The central but problematic nature of class as a locus for public sociology is illustrated through the tension between class analysis and working class identity in workers' and community education.

Arguably, framing public sociology as dialogue with subaltern counter-publics prompts the question of legitimacy in public sociology, and the requirement for public sociologists to justify our work in terms of subalternity and countering, both to our academic peers and to our publics – a dual accountability. In this context a theme regularly emerging is the constant risk of the sociologist 'colonising' the subaltern, and exploiting their struggles for the purposes of an academic political economy which values such engagement in narrow terms of market share, institutional reputation and impact. This is an important consideration, of which our contributors are keenly aware (although the risks associated with the metaphor of colonisation has also been highlighted). The contributors take a range of approaches in addressing this through the case studies: through multiple co-authorship and reporting of co-authored photovoice, to extensive quoting from participants and taking soundings from key informants. The focus of the cases has been the subaltern counter-publics with whom an educational engagement is occurring.

However, what of publics that are found not to meet the criteria of subalternity or counter public? What, for example, of subalterns that are not 'countering'. Gilfillan's working class in Fife are portrayed as affluent and show little interest in either engagement in 'empowerment through education' or engaging in any other form of class

struggle against the owners of industrial capital that have abandoned their communities. By contrast, the axis of empowerment that has more purchase is cultural, and in particular in relation to a 'New Scotland discourse' and the unstable constitutional settlement within the UK. At the same time as class is undermined as a category of subaltern counter-public, forms of class exploitation are becoming more pronounced and varied. With the impact of austerity eroding any experience of affluence of the working class, it isn't clear that this will lead to a revival in class analysis.

The category of subaltern counter-public remains a point of departure in unexpected ways. University academics (which describes most public sociologists at least some of the time), whilst enjoying some relative privileges compared with other groups, nonetheless constitute subaltern counter-publics when we collectively resist the causes of our exploitation as workers – an issue which Lena Wånggren returns to in section III of this collection. And there are many public sociologists engaging not with subaltern groups directly, but with those who act in solidarity with, for example, colonised and persecuted people internationally, with the environment, or with those for whom countering may carry high risk (asylum seekers). For these diverse forms of public sociology, how useful is the heuristic of the subaltern counter-public?

In Fraser's concept of subaltern counter-public, 'public' refers to a public sphere in which subaltern groups express and advocate their interests. To what extent is the practice of public sociology concerned with the creation of new spaces of public sphere – often in or connected to the university - which can be enriched through the dialogues between struggle and knowledge?

The provocation identified a tension between a structural analyses of subalternity, and subaltern identity. Mad is an identity – it is a term with which some people with experience of psychiatric labelling have identified, based on symbolic, cultural and epistemic exclusion. The response to exclusion is to reclaim that categorisation and

subvert its social construction in order to value Mad experience. In this project, Mad-identified people draw on whatever resources can provide the analytical power which is 'really useful' to their struggle – which includes, but is not limited to sociology. A question which a sociologist might raise is, what is the next step beyond valuing 'ignored voices'? As Sapouna and O'Donnell (2017) challenge: anti-psychiatry is not enough, mad-friendly spaces is not enough, nor even how madness intersects with gender, 'race', sexuality, disability etc. Is there a need for a structural analysis of madness from the perspective of the Mad people's movement? What is the function of madness in totalising social structures such as capitalism or patriarchy? What is the source of oppression around which madness can mobilise? To what extent is Mad studies 'counter hegemonic'?

Feminism is Fraser's classic subaltern counter-public, constructed by women who are excluded from the public sphere, who organise their own space in order to re-enter the public sphere from a position of strength and an analysis of their oppression. Gender is structural and also cultural – Fraser's bivalent category (Fraser 1995). As Orr and Whiting (Chapter I.2), and Young (Chapter I.3) explore, the resources deployed in the practice of challenging gender based violence through education and research include, but are not limited to, the sociological.

Class is structural and retains robust analytical power but, as Gilfillan and others recognised, there is a decline in identification with subaltern classes. Is this a role that public sociologists play (as Scandrett's 'soundings' suggest, Chapter I.5), to introduce class analysis opportunistically in contexts where it is necessary but not obvious? This is the sociological imagination – and sometimes it requires quite a leap of imagination – which is the task of the public sociologist. Erik Olin Wright (2015)'s assessment of the different levels of analysis which class requires: micro, meso and macro; to which, he suggests, sociology based on empirical, Weberian and Marxian sources correlate. To this end, a challenge for public sociologists might be to engage simultaneously with the totality of the micro-level of experience, the meso-level of policy and the macro-level of

exploitation. Freire's pedagogy, in which the concrete and the abstract are constantly brought together for mutual interrogation to generate new knowledge is key here, as a number of contributors allude. But such practice clearly remains problematic in the institutions of education, from community work and the WEA to the university, each of which is pressed to perform non-dialogical functions of 'employability'.

On the contrary, in some cases the invisibility of class results in a mis-identification of structures of oppression to be countered and deflected onto other subaltern groups. The experience of exclusion from the public sphere amongst some subaltern groups can lead to resisting the efforts of others to counter their own sources of oppression. This is not a new phenomenon, but a revival in racism, xenophobia, misogyny and homophobia and the populist far Right movements of identitarianism and ethnic nationalism makes this an urgent challenge, not least to public sociologists. What role can public sociologists play with publics whose subalternity is exploited and counter-public spaces directed against a liberal cosmopolitanism which is associated with celebrating diversity and challenging multiple sources of oppression? This is perhaps a departure from Burawoy's ambivalence, strongly criticised by others (eg Arribas Lozano 2018) that 'public sociology has no intrinsic normative valence, other than the commitment to dialogue around issues raised in and by sociology. It can as well support Christian Fundamentalism as it can Liberation Sociology or Communitarianism.' (Burawoy 2005 p 8-9). Can public sociology really support racist populism? Does public sociology have anything to say to those drawn towards it?

There are occasions where the interests of different subaltern groups appear to conflict and here it seems that there is a need to identify shared sources of oppression around which counter-public activity can be mobilised – without thereby reinforcing other forms of oppression. Examples of this include conflicts between workers and the environment, regularly played out in local environmental justice struggles (eg Scandrett et al 2012) and in Scotland at the time of writing through the tensions in the trade union movement over Just Transition. Other areas of apparent conflicts of interest are within and on the

edges of feminism, such as those emerging in Orr and Whiting's *Gender Justice and Violence* programme, conflicts over prostitution/sex work; pornography and trans rights, issues which have become highly charged at the time of writing, in some cases, leading to the silencing of committed activist-academics. Whilst public sociology might be an ideal place for negotiating these interfaces within a totality, in practice, these sociological analyses also come with identity. Categories such as radical feminist, Marxist, mad-positive, trans-inclusive etc are not merely committed sociological critiques, but also become identities which can also exclude. There is an emotional as well as intellectual engagement with counter-publics which makes the work of public sociology affective as well as analytical. How can public sociology negotiate these milieu in order to make its distinctive contribution?

Turning to the cultural, to what extent, as Gilfillan suggests, is a 'New Scotland discourse' a counter-public sphere in which public sociology needs to take its place? As Burawoy (2005 p.20) has indicated, public sociology needs to be 'provincialised', in his case as 'American' (the United States) and elsewhere (Burawoy 2008) 'for California'. In the case of all contributors to this section, our 'province' is Scotland, and a Scotland with a changing sense of itself. To what extent do these discussions in fact contribute to a public sociology for, or of, Scotland?

The inclusion of Eurig's chapter (I.5) as a rejoinder to Paul's analysis (Chapter I.4) has continued as a dialogue on the importance of class for public sociology, and some of this is quoted in this Dialogue. For Paul, the battle between Fraser's (and Scandrett's) and Burawoy's definition seems to be fundamental. But, he wonders if it is resolved? Why is Fraser's notion of the subaltern counter-public especially privileged? If public sociology is defined as Fraser does (and not as Burawoy does) then we sociologists have to engage with a subaltern group that is also counter-public.

Paul argues that sociology faces the kind of irrelevance to the working class that has befallen for example the Labour Party in Scotland, unless it maintains the connection to the working class. English sociologists Evans and Tilley (2017) argue there has occurred a sharp decline in the perceived relevance of the Left-wing political parties since the 1990s; in the UK there is evidence the Labour Party has become more of a home for middle-class professionals than the manual workers it was founded to represent (Evans and Tilley 2017, p. 151). In addition, although public sociologists can be accused of colonising the subaltern (an issue not faced by Paul which decades of ethnographic study of his own working class community), he notes that there is a price to be paid by the public sociologist. We have to suffer their stigma too if we study them. Contagion! We pay a price. It's not sexy or something of prestige in middle class academia. And working class people do not thank you for it either! So there's reasons imminent to the university that invisibilises class.

<2>Gilfillan and Scandrett in dialogue

During the production of the book, much debate was triggered by an interview quoted by Paul from his ethnographic research in Fife. In order to reflect some of this debate, and as a contribution to dialogue on public sociology, this quotation is reproduced here along with excerpts from the dialogue that has followed.

Paul (ethnographer):

In May 2018 I interviewed 'Alec,' a forty-eight year-old plumber with Fife Council (and Associate WEA member thanks to attending one of the local history group classes) who was at my house to do some repairs. As we chatted he asked what line of work I was in that meant I was able to work from home. I told him I was a sociologist; which provoked the query, 'What's that, then'? I replied it meant studying contemporary society and social change; which led Alec to voice his opinions on a range of topics:

Alec: Honestly, they're tryin tae brek up the family. Family values. They're wantin tae turn them oan ther heid. What's good: bad. And what's bad: good. An it's only happened in the last six months tae a year. They're tryin tae; it wis a couple years ago, two or three years ago. Ah used tae say tae Mary [wife]: 'Ken this, ken what fuckin annoys me, they're makin the man oot tae be a complete clown, eh? It doesnae matter if it's a soap pooder advert or ken like buyin a loaf e breid; he comes back wi... ken what Ah mean? Makin the man oot tae be a complete an utter muppet. An yer thinkin every fuckin advert's like that! If it wis the ither wiy aroond they'd be hivin kittens. 'How dare ye portray women as...' ken? It slowly creeps in. Wee things creepin in. Ah cannae sit an watch the telly wi Mary these days because Ah jist; like she wis watchin a crime thing the other night an two black guys and, Bulletproof or somethin it's called, and, it's like a modern day The Sweeney eh? An Ah wis like, 'Ah'll tell ye what's gonnae happen here. The boss Regan is gonnae be a woman, right? There'll be like fuckin, two eh Islamic women runnin aboot there whose like senior detectives. There'll be two guys, eh, white guys, who are the guys that are makin the mistakes, an who're talkin like clowns, bein absolute muppets, and the two black guys'll be the heroes. Am Ah right or am Ah wrang?' 'Oh jist shut yer pus an dinnae watch it if ye dinnae want tae watch it!' [wife] An Ah was 'Am Ah right or am Ah wrang? Am seen it right here the noo!'

Paul: Me and the wife watch aa' these Scandinavian crime dramas, an Ah'll say before it starts: 'Ah'll tell ye what will happen. The hero is a woman. And the people who are commitin aa' the crimes are Christian fundamentalists or anti-liberals.'

Alec: Aye! Yer wane e the extreme sort e views that are just conflicting wi everybody else in the programme. They make them oot tae be a bit e an oddball. Aye. It's slowly but surely jist brainwashin people. An Ah'd say that wi the race thing tae. In the last six months ye cannae fuckin watch an advert oan the telly where the man an wife are no fuckin mixed race. It's like somebody has tell't them. Like there's a quota or a target tae be met. Ah've said that tae Mary. An aa' Ah get is 'Since when did ye turn intae a racist?' Ah says 'Ah'm no bein racist, am jist pointin oot tae ye; d'ye no think that's a bit odd?' 'No it's no. It's racist' she says. 'Yer on youtube too much.' As says 'Ah'm no on

youtube too much. Ah read quite a lot an aw.' Ah says Ah can see what's happenin. So Ah've got tae sit an shut ma pus a lot. They're just pushin an agenda. An it's the same with the gay thing. An every time Ah point this oot it's like 'So are ye some sort e homophobic racist?' Ah says 'Ah'm no. Ah'm jist pointin oot tae ye it's odd that aa e a sudden.' Bit the guid thing is because Ah work wi a lot e boys fae years ago talkin aboot, they're noo catchin oan tae things like that. An they're sayin 'Aye, it's fuckin shockin, eh?' Yer run e the mill boys on a building site are beginning tae notice things. Whoever's daen this, has got everybody's really checkin their sels oot wi things like that. Everybody's feart tae speak oot. Where nowadays Ah'm jist, tell it as Ah see it, ken? People are censoring themsels. They're feart tae speak oot. Ah'm pretty confident folk'll jist, there'll be some sort e [inaudible at this point] comes doon; as Ah say Ah work wi boys who they've nae political persuasion whatever; who'll jist sit an read the sports pages an they're gone, 'How is this; this is fuckin shockin. Two men getting married. How's that happenin?' They're startin tae catch on tae it. And that Irish abortion thing. Ye've got fuckin Nicola Sturgeon sayin let's trust women. Ya cunt does she say let's trust women to pay the right taxes? Does she fuck! Does she say let's decriminalise murder an jist trust women tae make the right decision an' no kill somebody? Does she fuck! The fuckin SNP we aa voted fir isnae in charge. It's these fuckin liberals. An Ah'll tell ye what ye have tae watch fir an aw, an Ah've said this for years, an everybody's like. 'Fuck! Here he goes again,' eh? Ah think they're gonnae try an lower the age e consent. Watch fir that creepin slowly but surely. Break the family up. See the named person scheme; who the fuck thought that up? Aright there's a lot e vulnerable families oot there, that's what the social work department is fir, eh?

Paul: Have ye seen the latest stupidity? I can now be a woman because I say I'm a woman.

Alec: There's people behind this. Slowly but surely. Ah jist see it as a new wiy e brining communism back. Ah think that's what it is, eh? Attack the Church. Attack the family. Bring in the LGBT. Gie thame a say. Wance they get their fuckin claws intae everybody. Look at that carry oan wi that survey in Perth and Kinross back whenever it was; an noo some fuckin clown in the SNP wants tae criminalise parents who hit their bairns.

Eurig Scandrett

Eurig (editor):

I do not think that the section 'Producing Sociological Analysis with Associate Members' should be in the chapter. The connection with the WEA is tendentious and the arguments do not follow. 'Alec' does not reflect a 'subaltern counter-public' as argued in the provocation, his narrative does not address the sociological grounds for subalternity (class exploitation, British unionism) but is a defence of straight white male privilege and the promotion of injustice by pathologising black, female and LGBT representation in culture. Racism, homophobia, heteronormativity and anti-liberalism is as much to be found in middle class England, and indeed in sociological texts, and I do not think it has a place in our argument about public sociology. Introducing this narrative detracts from an interesting argument about the WEA and the post-industrial working class.

Paul:

I will be in 'Alex's' company tonight so it'll be interesting to get his reaction to you calling him a racist and a representative of straight white male privilege and a promoter of injustice by pathologising black, female and LGBT representation in culture.

What I'd find helpful is if you could give me some help identifying what is counter-public and what is subaltern? You mention in your email "the sociological grounds for subalterneity (eg class exploitation, British unionism" and I am not sure what that means. Does it mean being working class means you qualify as being subaltern? Or only if you not only are working class but also discourse on the topic of class exploitation?

Eurig Scandrett

Also, can you clarify if being a British unionist means you are subaltern? Or is it that being a Scottish nationalist means you are subaltern? To me the subaltern idea is something I associate with Spivak's famous article on lower caste females in India having no voice. So some clear examples of what would qualify as a subaltern counter-public in Scotland would be very helpful.

Another question I'd find it helpful to get clarity on is what public do you have to be against in order to be counter-public? Could you give me a list of counter-publics? Not exhaustive obviously but a few examples that occur to you so I can get a sense of the answer.

Eurig:

I think your questions are important ones in the discussions of public sociology, as indeed they are somewhat represented in the literature. What I am arguing is that the 'public' with which public sociologists (at least in the sense of Burawoy's Organic Public sociology) engage needs to be a subaltern counter-public. To state that, is to ask more questions than to answer – some of which you have identified. What does subaltern mean, sociologically?

Spivak's version, in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (Spivak 1988) is an important contribution to this debate, which I take as a critique of Gramsci's understanding of the role of such groups in class formation and the emergence of class consciousness, at least in the postcolonial context. Spivak is of course located within the Subaltern Studies' group whose interest is in the history of the multitude of diverse, non-elite groups in South Asia. Others have used the term in other contexts. In Evelyn Nakano Glenn's (2007) response to Burawoy ('Whose Public Sociology? The Subaltern Speaks but who is listening?') she uses the term largely to mean women and racialised minorities in the USA, and refers to women's studies and African American studies as

'subaltern fields' and subaltern scholars within sociology. It seems to me that it is important to explore and justify the meaning of subalternity sociologically, in terms of the structures of power in societies. It is relatively clear that African Americans as a category are subaltern in the context of USA, even though some African Americans can be elite (even President). But they are not elite as African Americans (you might say they are elite despite being African American). So the interconnecting sociological categories of power, exploitation of labour power, symbolic oppression in culture, discrimination etc are essential to an understanding of subalternity – this is what the intersectionality / social reproduction debate is all about.

When Nancy Fraser introduced the concept of the subaltern counter-public it was in relation to the narratives of groups who are disempowered or under-represented within Habermas's liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere. She refers to public sphere and publics (and the nature of 'publicity') but doesn't really define either subaltern or counter-public which she appears to take as given. I would regard this as our point of departure, bringing sociological categories to analyse and justify subalternity and counter-ness.

You ask for some clear examples of what would qualify as a subaltern counter-public in Scotland. This, I think, is part of our project of public sociology. Scotland is capitalist, and part of a global capitalist economy. It is also social democratic, having retained a good bit of the infrastructure of social democracy of the British state, but which is being dismantled in England. The working class is a subaltern class within capitalism as a result of the exploitation of its labour power, or its subordinate position in terms of life chances, or its symbolic representation in public discourse (depending on which line of sociological analysis you prefer). The British working class is a subaltern counter-public in the sense that it has collectively challenged these forms of exploitation, subordination, misrepresentation etc. Social democracy is one of its major achievements. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are subaltern within Scotland due to the institutional racism which is present in British institutions, the

legacy of British colonialism, the symbolic under-representation of their culture, religions, visible presence, minority status, demonisation by white supremacists etc. There is much sociological literature on this. BAME communities are counter-publics in that they have collectively challenged aspects of their oppression and exploitation, and have achieved some success.

Scotland (ie the people of Scotland) is subaltern in relation to the British state since it has historically been denied the same political control over its affairs that England has enjoyed and is subject to symbolic misrepresentation through the legacy of explicit repression of culture (language, music etc) and through institutional invisibility (eg the Brexit referendum, which ignored Scotland's majority vote to remain). The people of Scotland have, collectively, challenged this subalternity through cultural revivals, the devolution movement and the ongoing campaign for independence, and thus can be regarded a counter-public in this sense. Similarly women are subaltern within Scotland as a result of the exploitation of unpaid labour, symbolic misrepresentation, sexual violation, the glass ceiling etc and have collectively countered these forms of exploitation with some legislative and cultural success. All of these categories of subalternity have countered the axes of their oppression, achieved some success, to defend this success against reaction and to continue to counter ongoing oppression. None of these categories is homogenous and they interact with one another generating conflicting interest.

So for the male white working class in Scotland, the axes of their subalternity lie in 'class' (in relation to the capitalist class / higher status classes / symbolic representation of habitus etc) and 'Scotland' (in relation to the British state, the democratic deficit and symbolic misrepresentation) but not in 'white' (since white is the hegemonic category of 'race' in Scotland), nor in 'male' (since male is hegemonic in Scotland). 'Alec's' narrative locates the source of his grievance in what he perceives as the over-representation of black and female characters in symbolically superior positions in popular culture and in society more generally. If this narrative is to represent a subaltern counter-public then it

would be challenging the causes of subalternity (in opposition to capitalism / higher status classes and the British state / British nationalism), not challenging the achievements of other subaltern groups in their struggles to challenge the over-representation of white and male characters in symbolically superior positions in society.

Some of these axes of oppression have been central to the project of the New Left movements which you critique in your chapter, although arguably the achievements have tended to be liberal rather than New Left – the New Left is an attempt to challenge the liberalism from the Left. Again I would find helpful Nancy Fraser's (1995) distinction between affirmative and transformative responses to injustice, which I think explains some of the category errors in Alec's narrative.

For most subaltern counter-publics (and indeed most public sociology worldwide) the experience of subalternity is obvious and needs little justification - experienced through poverty, hunger, violence, destitution, dispossession etc, - public sociology can contribute to analysing the particular forms and causes of exploitation in order to counter them. In post-industrial, post-colonising, social democratic, devolved Scotland, public sociology has a role, I would argue, in analysing the nature of subalternity as well as the strategies of countering (see Arribas Lozano 2018 similar argument from South Africa).

There is a valuable sociological task in understanding why Alec's narrative challenges the achievements of other subaltern groups, rather than the axes of the subalternity of his class and nation. This may indeed be another task for public sociology. There is also a sociological task (probably not a public sociological task) in understanding the experience represented in Alec's narrative as part of a rejection of liberalism, or as you have called it elsewhere a 'systematic integralism'. I'm not convinced that a conservative public sociology is the answer, but this is a legitimate debate.

Eurig Scandrett

I hope that you had a good evening with 'Alec' and would be interested to hear his response. I don't know 'Alec' of course and have no opinion about whether he is personally racist (although his wife 'Mary' seems to think he is) but I would regard his narrative as racist.

Paul

I think if you talk about a counter-public that is working class then you have to include a sociological criticism of television as they consumer so much of it. In this regards 'Alec's' rant against the public realm of television being SUDDENLY awash with ethnic minorities and sexual minorities etc from 2016/7 (who on any sociological analysis are clearly marginal and subaltern in some respects) but in the television context Alec was referring to are clearly on any sociological analysis not there to have any agenda of their own but to signal companies happy to include these people in their customer base so they are there to sell products and signal how banks and drink companies are nice inclusive neoliberal consumers and how these groups are nicely incorporated into neoliberalism. (I know you are aware of this). You disallow Alec as a counter-public voice because he 'misinterprets the source of his grievances.' I think Alec in his own mind is criticising not ethnic minorities and homosexuals but criticising advertising as ciphers for selling liberalism. It seems you think adverts with lots of ethnic mixed couples and programmes of incompetent white men are 'representations of resistance'? Surely a sociological analysis of Alec means looking at the public sphere as reproducing tightly controlled access to it and the close policing of content? What gets allowed and what gets banned. So I'd say a plumber isn't misrecognising anything but raising the question about what changes have occurred in the British public realm recently so the public sociologist would have to reference how the social institutions that self-regulate the content of TV and radio advertisement in Britain (The Advertising Standards Authority Ltd and the Committee of Advertising Practice Ltd and The Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice Ltd) have all made it mandatory to include the LGBT

agenda and I see they have recently agreed to enforce the ban on all 'stereotyping' in adverts on the basis of sex. Now you can't watch adverts without it being a mixed race couple. Now every washing up liquid advert has a young man washing the dishes. How very progressive. How fuckin patronising to women! This fools nobody. Certainly not Alec as it changes nothing. So what is the analysis of sociology?

The interpretation of these new rules by sociologists of course will always be different. One analysis will say they give voice to the marginalised and other interpretations will say they are just more examples of the 'opportunity hoarding' by the middle class you mentioned, as liberals are the only ones who can sign off on this tokenistic bullshit. I assume you'd agree with me that liberalism is entirely functional to social groups' practice of 'opportunity hoarding'? I also think that is an interesting line of argumentation / contestation that a Marxist-inspired Public Sociology could pursue.

So when I listen to Alec I don't see a racist when he bemoans mixed race couples but someone who is clearly against this part of the public realm, that doesn't lay a glove on structural issues, but because it pushes other agendas it imagines itself progressive and even virtuous. And he is just venting against an agenda being pushed onto him as a viewer of this important aspect of the public realm. Some working class people have a nose for agendas being pushed onto them by more powerful others. Some don't. Alec's wife, for example, seems to have no such awareness of an agenda at work. So, we have two opposite views of two lay people. Who is right according to sociological analysis? I'd say Alec every time.

But these changes in representational regimes are sociologically interesting of course. It shows some agendas in the neoliberal order are easily incorporated and represented while others are not. There's no mention of class. I know you know this, but maybe you could strengthen the invisibility of class theme you have by developing it in the realm of

television as class has been wiped clean off out screens – unless its ‘consecrated’ class representations like Downtown Abbey of course.

You say I portray the working class as having the conservative values of family, religion and locality. Yes! They are conservative. That’s how I find them. You quote SI on p. 61 saying working class communities were oppressive in the 1970s and 1980s for blacks and people with diverse sexualities. And he says that representation is simplistic and retrograde. Well last year a local gay hairdresser left for Glasgow. He was, and I quote from his co-worker, ‘sick e bein the only gay in the village havin to put up wi grief all the time.’ Total cliché I know and then there’s more examples of harassment I could easily give. And of course there are counter-examples such as local SNP councillor on a pride march in Kirkcaldy.

I think the whole question of what counts as counter-cultural might be more empirical. What for Fraser is counter-cultural and what isn’t? What are the counter-cultural causes public sociology validates and which are the ones it invalidates. These ‘impossible’ questions are begging for an answer. You have to say the left-liberal causes are fine for public sociologists to get behind and the anti-liberal conservative ones are not really public sociology, or you say both liberal and conservative ones are fine. Otherwise the whole thing is fudged. Unless you resolve it by saying as a professional sociologist you allow a broad church as sociology is a broad church and has liberals and conservative voices – that in real life most sociologists are liberal in some respects and conservative in other respects.

Conclusions

There are two aspects of how to conclude this dialogue: from the perspective of sociology and from the perspective of social justice. Advances in the representation of (some) subaltern groups in the cultural public sphere, for example on television, are certainly exploited for neoliberal gain. At the same time, the material oppression of

Eurig Scandrett

subaltern groups continues, whilst the material exploitation of subaltern classes remains invisible. So the debate is not so much about which groups is it legitimate for public sociologists to work with, but rather what axes of exploitation and oppression can be targeted by public sociologists in the interests of social justice.

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